Title: 'Sense of a Community': Santiniketan in Memoirs

Name of Scholar: Anindita Chongdar

Supervisor: Dr. Swati Ganguly

Registration No. VB 72 of 2002-03

Date of Registration: 03.05.2016

Synopsis

This thesis plans to explore the responses to and critiques of the idea of the community imagined by Rabindranath Tagore in the memoirs about Santiniketan. Using the theoretical debates about nationalism, the production of space and creation of identity, I seek to interrogate how the memoir becomes mod through which such responses and critiques can be examined.Beginning from Rabindranath's *Jibansmriti*, Santiniketan had been a space largely fabricated in imagination—the narratives and anecdotes of Santiniketan play a crucial role in the creation of such a space. The thesis seek to contemplate on the passage from *brahmavidyalaya* to*brahmacharyashram* and from *brahmacharyashram* to Visva-Bharati roughly covering the time span from 1901 to 1941—that is, from the inception of *brahmacharyashram* till Rabindranath's death —how the concepts of *gurugriha*, *tapovan*, *ashram* interacted with the notion of a community to create a space alternative to the rigid formulation of nation.

Rabindranath, in several of his writings (*Asramer Roop o Bikash, "*My School",the essays on Visva-Bharati in *Rabindra Rachanabali,* to name a few)has theorized his project and attracted a wide range of associates. Enthusiasts like Brahmabandhab Upadhaya, Satischandra Roy, Ajitkumar Chakraborty together with a host of foreign scholars participated in Rabindranath's educational venture. My interest lies in the way they (contemporaries of Rabindranath, teachers, students, and visitors) participated in the sense of the community. What were their responses to such ideas of education and exchange of culture? What were the responses to the nationalist movement from within the ashram community? How was the experiment at Sriniketan seen by Rabindranath's associates and how did the students react to the gap between the idea and reality? The memoirs of Santiniketan, composed at different times, attempt to encapsulate such responses and provide a sense of participation in the community. Can the memoirs provide an alternative history of Santiniketan/Visva-Bharati/ashram community? The politics of selection and rejection in the memoirs is of utmost significance—why some incidents are prioritised over the others in a particular narrative? Why some memoirs remain silent about certain incidents? My aim would be to unearth the gaps and silences in the memoirs.

My dissertation tries to locate the complexities of the responses to Rabindranath's experiment through the memoirs. The writers of the memoirs fall under several groups: the associates of Rabindranath, ex-students, faculty members, foreign visitors. Women, both as students, associates and visitors are among the writers—the memoirs of the women of the ashram community provide invaluable information and insight.It is significant to note that

initially the school was meant for the boys; later it was to become one of the earliest instances of a co-educational institution. Depending on the writer's perspective, the tone and appraisal varies from the eulogistic to the critical.

The thesis will be divided into five chapters. In the first chapter I intend to discuss the theoretical debates about autobiography/memoir—what is the difference between autobiography and memoir and why I have selected memoirs to work with. The second chapter focuses on the memoirs about ashram school (by teachers and students) and the early phase of Santiniketan. The chapter intends to incorporate primarily Rathindranath Tagore's *On the Edges of Time,* Sudhiranjan Das's *Amader Santiniketan*and Pramathanath Bishi's *Rabindranath o Santiniketan*. Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay's *Santiniketan o Visva-Bharati*, Manoranjan Bandyopadhyay's *Smriti,* Jagadananda Roy's *Smriti*, Sitadevi's *Punyasmriti* would be used as references.

The third chapter concentrates on the memoirs about the later phase of Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati — Pramathanath Bishi's *Rabindranath o Santiniketan* (a section of the memoir deals with his days in Visva-Bharati as a student), Syed Mujtaba Ali's *Gurudev o Santiniketan,* Rani Chanda's *Alapchari Rabindranath*, *Gurudev* and *Sab Hote Apan,* Shivani's *AmaderSantiniketan,* Amita Sen's *Santiniketane Ashramkanya*. The memoirs of Kala-Bhavan and Sangeet-Bhavan would also be dealt with in this chapter. Benode Behari Mukherjee's *Chitrakatha*, though not a memoir, provides invaluable information regarding the early days of Kala-Bhavan. The narratives of Sailajaranjan Majumdar (*Jatrapather Anandagaan*), Santidev Ghosh (*Jibaner Dhrubotara*) would be referred to for the memoirs of Sangeet-Bhavan.

The fourth chapter looks at Rabindranath in Santiniketan primarily through the narratives of the foreigners— student, visitor, teachers of Santiniketan. The chapter focuses on Shitoku Hori's *Diary*, Madame Levi's *Diary*, W.W. Pearson's *Santiniketan*, Alex Aronson's *Brief Chronicles of Time, Rabindranath through Western Eyes.*The fifth chapter deals with the memoirs of Sriniketan— L.K. Elmhirst *Poet and Plowman* and Sisirkumar Ghosh's *Amar Paoa Santiniketan*.

A detailed conclusion looks at the evaluation and critique of the dissemination of Rabindranath's ideas. Did the community remain a utopia restricted to Rabindranath's vision or did it fulfill the objective of the formation of a new identity that rests in the assimilation of the home and the world, local and the global? How the memoirs Lila Majumdar's *Pakdandi* and Buddhadev Bose's *Sab Peyechhir Deshe* would be referred to in the conclusion. The biographies of Rabindranath— both by Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay and Prasantakumar Pal—*Rabindra Jibani* and *Rabijibani*, the volumes of letters by Rabindranath (*Chithipatra*), the journals and periodicals—*Santiniketan Patrika, Visva-Bharati News, Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, the official documents like Visva-Bharati Annual Reports— all these would provide the relevant information regarding the particular span of time dealt in the memoirs.

Bibliography

Ali, Syed Mujtaba. *Gurudev O Santiniketan*.1981. Kolkata: Mitra and Ghosh Pvt.Ltd.,

2008. Print.

Azuma, Kazuo. *Ujjal Surjo*. Kolkata: Subarnarekha, 1996. Print.

Basu, Nimaisadhan. *Bhagnanir Visva-Bharati*. Kolkata:Ananda Publishers Limited, 1991. Print.

Bishi, Pramathanath. *Rabindranath O Santiniketan*. 1944. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 2008. Print.

Bose, Manjula, ed. *Centenary Volume: L.K Elmhirst 1893-1993*.Kolkata: Tagore Research Institute, 1994. Print.

Chakraborty, Ajitkumar. *Brahmavidyalaya*. 1951. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 1990. Print.

Chakraborty, Rama. *Bhara Thak Smriti Sudhay*. Kolkata: Tagore Research Institute, 2001. Print.

Chanda, Rani. *Alapchari. Rabindranath.*1942. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 2000. Print.

Das, Sisir Kumar,ed. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Vols.2 & 3. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1996. Print.

Das, Sudhiranjan. *Amader Santiniketan*. 1959. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 1987. Print.

Dutta, Hirendranath. *Santiniketaner ek Yug*. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 1980. Print.

Dutta, Krishna, and Andrew Robinson,eds. *Purabi: A Miscellany in memory of Rabindranath Tagore 1941-1991*.London: The Tagore Centre UK, 1991. Print.

Elmhirst, Leonard K. *Poet and Plowman.* Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Publishing Department, 2008. Print.

Hori, Shitoku. *Shitoku Horir Dinpanji* 1944. Trans. Kazuo Azuma. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 2008. Print.

Levy, Alexandra. *Madame Levir Diary*. Trans.and ed. Nandadulal Dey. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, 2000. Print.

Mukhopadhay, Prabhatkumar. *Santiniketan-Visva-Bharati*.1962. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 2000. Print.

Pearson,William. *Santiniketaner Smriti*. Trans. Amiyakumar Sen. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 1995. Print.

Sen, Amita. *Santiniketane Ashramkanya.* Kolkata: Tagore Research Institute, 1977. 4th ed. 2002. Print.

Sen, Kamala. *Shruti-Smiriti (1).* Santiniketan: Rabindra Bhavana, 2000. Print.

Sen, Kshitimohan. *Rabindranath O Santiniketan* .Ed. Pranati Mukhopadhay. 2009. Kolkata: Punascha, 2010. Print.

Tagore, Pratima. *Nirban*. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthalaya, 1942. Print.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *Chitipatra*. Vol.15. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 1995. Print.

---. *Home and the World*. Trans. Surendranath Tagore.1919. New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 2004. Print.

---. *Rabindra Rachanabali*. Vols.6 & 14. 1988. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 2010. Print.

---. *Sadhana:The Realisation of Life*. London: Macmillan, 1957.Print.

---. *Santiniketan*. Vol.2. 1991. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthanbibhag, 1994. Print.

Tagore, Rathindranath. *Pitrismriti.*1966. Kolkata: Jigyasha Publication (Pvt.) Limited, 1988. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 1991. Print.

Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography.* London and New York: Routledge, 2001. Print. The New Critical Idiom.

Brown, Garrett Wallace, and David Held, eds. *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*. UK: Polity Press, 2010. Print.

Lejeune, Philippe. “The Autobiographical Contract.” *French Literary Theory Today*. Ed. Tzvetan Todorov. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Print.

Majumdar, Nepal. *Visva-Bharatir Bandhura: Gandhiji O Kayekjan*. Kolkata: Dey’s Publishing, 1998. Print.

Marcus, Laura. *Auto/biographical Discourses*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994. Print.

Neogy, Ajit K. *The Twin Dreams of Rabindranath Tagore: Santiniketan and Sriniketan*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2010. Print.

Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny.* London: Allen Lane-Penguin Books, 2006. Print.

---. “Tagore and his India.” Nobel Laureates in Search of Identity and Integrity: Voices of Different Cultures. Ed. Anders Hallengren. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co.Pte.Ltd., 2004. Google Book Search. Web. 5 Jan.2012.

Trepanier, Lee, and Khalil M. Habib, eds. *Cosmopolitanism in the Age of: Globalization:Citizens without States.* Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2011. *Google Book Search*. Web. 29 Dec.2011.